

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: Veterinarians; Hospitals; Pharmacists; Infection Control Practitioners;
Public Health-Required

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Temporary Decrease in Human Rabies Vaccine Supplies

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
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Continued Decrease in Human Rabies Vaccine Supplies

Background:

- Rabies vaccine for humans in the United States is provided by two manufacturers: Sanofi Pasteur produces IMOVAX® and Novartis produces RabAvert®.
- The federal CDC has been notified by Novartis, maker of RabAvert®, that the supply of human rabies vaccine is being used at a higher rate than expected, which may affect the near-term availability of vaccine for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).
- This development follows the August 14 news release by Sanofi Pasteur, which announced the unavailability of the IMOVAX® vaccine until late September or early October.
- Because of limited existing supplies, CDC strongly recommends that health-care providers, state and local public health authorities, animal control officials, and the public take immediate steps to ensure appropriate use of human rabies biologics.

Recommendations Regarding Post-Exposure Prophylaxis:

- For post-exposure prophylaxis, Novartis is now requiring health care providers confer with public health officials, and obtain a confirmation code from state or local health departments before releasing or ordering vaccine doses for PEP to ensure adequate risk assessments at the local level.
- Please consult with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 for exposure assessment, and to obtain a confirmation code, before contacting Novartis at 1-800-244-7668 to obtain Rabies vaccine doses for patients who have been exposed to rabies.

Persons with possible rabies exposure should be evaluated as soon as possible by a health-care provider. Since PEP is an urgent medical issue but not an emergency, it can be delayed until animal rabies testing or clinical observation is completed. This approach not only limits administration of PEP to persons with confirmed rabies exposure, but it is also cost-saving and conserves limited resources.

Recommendations Regarding PRE-Exposure Prophylaxis:

- Vaccine availability for pre-exposure vaccination continues to be limited, and will be distributed on approval from state and federal public health authorities for those first responders with a critical need and in consideration of available supplies. These measures will allow responsible management of currently limited supplies of this vaccine for those individuals at highest risk of exposure.
- Vaccine is not currently available for pre-exposure prophylaxis for travelers and other persons at risk (cavers, etc.) whose activities involving possible exposure to rabies are voluntary, not critical, and could be postponed or avoided.
- Vaccine is not available for a single booster of persons previously vaccinated with a less than adequate virus neutralizing titer (<1:5), with the exception of first responders.
- Persons requesting pre-exposure prophylaxis should contact the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

For More Information: Please contact the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 for questions regarding rabies. Maine CDC staff are available 24/7 to respond to concerns and inquiries regarding rabies prophylaxis. The federal CDC will be providing frequent updates on vaccine supplies at: www.cdc.gov/rabies. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) human rabies prevention recommendations outline animal exposures associated with the risk of rabies: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5703a1.htm>.